



ASK

SEEK

Join the earliest disciples in asking  
*LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY*

A 9-WEEK DEVOTIONAL  
BASED ON LUKE 11:1-13

KNOCK

# ASK. SEEK. KNOCK.

LUKE 11: 1-13

*Join the earliest disciples in asking LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY*

Ask • Seek • Knock is an individual and corporate movement that will walk us into new patterns and habits of prayer as we walk more closely with Jesus.



**EDITORS**

Tim Newton  
John Mark Tittsworth

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**

Jeff Anderson  
Susan Dodson  
Tom and Lynn Fleeger  
Sharon Gresham  
Shari Halterman  
Tom Kemner  
Susan Maynard  
Tim Newton  
Jeff Rampy  
John Mark Tittsworth

**COVER ART**

Sean Walker

**BOOK DESIGN**

Shari Walker

# FOREWARD

by Scott Sharman

There are times in our ministry when engagement by all is essential. This is one of those times.

We embark together on a spiritual journey. Each step will lead us closer to our destination. Moment by moment, day by day, we will discover the value of prayer.

We connect with God and unite with one another through prayer. In prayer we encounter the power and presence of God. Through prayer we experience victory and freedom. By prayer we impact our community and change our world.

This journey will change our lives. Can we count on you to fully engage? Will you join the rest of the church in asking Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray?"

## **LUKE 11:1-13**

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."*

*He said to them, "When you pray, say:*

*"Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.*

*Give us each day our daily bread.*

*Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.*

*And lead us not into temptation."*

*Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity[e] he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.*

*"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.*

*"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

At the end of 9 weeks, we will be a different congregation. As we study what Jesus taught and modeled about prayer, will you do your best to discuss it with your family and Life Group? Use this guide to make notes from sermons and Life Group discussions about ideas and practices to revisit.

Each week has devotional thoughts that explore Sunday's topic, spread over five days. Take time to look up the Scripture passages mentioned. If you record your prayer topics and requests in the spaces provided (or in your journal), you will finish these 9 weeks with something like class notes from two months in *Jesus's school of prayer*. We will never be the same.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### SECTION 1 — ASK

Week 1 - Premise.....	4
Week 2 - Person.....	10
Week 3 - Purpose.....	16

### SECTION 2 — SEEK

Week 4 - Provision.....	22
Week 5 - Purity.....	28
Week 6 - Protection.....	34

### SECTION 3 — KNOCK

Week 7 - Persistence.....	40
Week 8 - Promise.....	46
Week 9 - Power.....	52

### HOW TO BEST ENGAGE THIS STUDY

- Visit our website: ([www.alsburybaptist.com](http://www.alsburybaptist.com))
- Join a Life Group (<http://alsburybaptist.com/groupink>)
- Sunday Mornings @ 10:30 AM
- Follow us @AlsburyChurch on







WEEK 1\_DAY 1

# JESUS LEARNED TO PRAY

## READ LUKE 2:40

Chances are good that Jesus had to learn how to pray. He did not appear on earth preloaded with the Bible. He grew and learned (Hebrews 5:7-9; Luke 2:40, 51-52). We can assume that he did not have any copies of Scripture scrolls at home because his family was not wealthy. So, he got his exposure to God's word from public readings at synagogue, occasional road trips to the temple, and people in his town who had memorized portions of Scripture.

The same passages from "the Law of Moses, Prophets, and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44) that help us to grasp Jesus as the centerpiece of Scripture- these helped a small-town Jewish boy come to understand and to fulfill his own identity. Jesus learned to pray because he needed the Father's help with awesome things (like suffering as God's Son- compare Matt 3:17 and 4:3, 6) and ordinary things (like "daily bread" and a place to stay). Scripture taught Jesus to take his weakness and his needs to God with "fervent cries and tears" (Hebrews 5:7).

## REFLECT AND PRAY

- This week, we will look at the Bible's prayer guide (Psalms), but today we start with this: Jesus understands our weakness. Read Hebrews 4:15-16. King Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses because he has lived through them, too. He learned how to pray.
- What kind of help do you need in order to pray regularly? Ask for that help.
- If Jesus has experienced weaknesses like you have, how does that help you appeal to him for help?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---





WEEK 1\_DAY 3

# PSALMS SNAP US AWAKE

## OPENING THOUGHTS

Our brains prioritize details from our environments- living vs. inanimate, threats vs. non-threats, new vs. familiar, etc. We instinctively pay little attention to items that do not seem urgent to us. After a few days of thinking, “I don’t care about that,” a stack of papers blends into my room. I work around it. It has become part of the furniture.

Learning to pray from the Psalms- without skipping any -works against our nature. Perhaps, we don’t even notice something or other about God anymore (or about ourselves). We don’t keep the story of God’s people or the gospel story front of mind because they have become part of the furniture of our personal faith.

## READ PSALM 41 WITH YOUR IMAGINATION ENGAGED.

- Take time to imagine each topic and to talk to God about each one. If some parts don’t match your experience, imagine how Jesus learned to pray with this psalm. Or, imagine a believer in another country praying about these same topics, and pray for believers in that country.
- Record any topics that caught your attention for the first time in a while (or ever)- topics that have “become furniture” to you.
- Revisit those topics in prayer later today or in the morning.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



**OPENING THOUGHT**

Our congregation is not very expressive in corporate worship. If you’ve been at Alsbury long enough, you have seen expressive worshipers come and go. It’s understandable. Someone with gushing enjoyment of God doesn’t want to become the center of attention simply because the rest of us in the room prefer minimal expressions. Out of respect for our congregational tone, some expressive worshipers stick around but find other outlets than the Sunday morning gathering.

**READ 150 AND GRAB SOMETHING THAT MAKES NOISE OR MELODY.**

“Hallelujah” is a command to praise or to be boastful about Yahweh. Like “wash your hands” or “wear a mask,” “Hallelujah” tells you to do something that isn’t optional. The Psalms are stuffed with commands to make noise with our voices and with noisemakers. Don’t meditate on those commands– do them. Today isn’t a quiet time. It’s a noisy time with and for the Creator of our bodies.

**REFLECT AND WORSHIP**

- What makes you most uncomfortable– shouting, singing, clapping, making noise/melody, dancing, or being still and silent before the Lord?
- Talk to the Lord about what makes you uncomfortable. Then, do it anyway.
- Every week of this guide, in your time reading Scripture and praying, engage your body with one of the ways commanded in the Psalms.
- Personal experience with God, in which we engage more of our body, carries over to corporate worship. Sunday mornings will gradually become more expressive for you and for us all. Hallelujah! ***(Make some noise!)***

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



WEEK 1\_DAY 5

# PSALMS RAISE OUR FAITH

## OPENING THOUGHT

Jesus learned how to pray, probably from the Psalms. He learned many ways to talk to his Father about his own weakness- complaining, begging for help, mourning losses, thanking for help, and boasting in God's power and loyalty on display. Jesus passed to his disciples his habits of praying- regularly and spontaneously, alone and together, in joy and in grief, before and after receiving help.

Before Jesus became the object and the example for our faith, he talked to God about the story of God's people. The Psalms guided Jesus through times of wonder and nearness, followed by times of distress and loneliness- as experienced by prior generations. Some psalms pointed to Jesus's central role in all of history, but all the Psalms formed his inner life. If we want to know Jesus more, what better can we do than to spend years in the same process of learning how to pray as he (probably) did?

## READ PSALM 111 ALOUD.

- Here is a short example of an alphabetic psalm, in which each short phrase begins with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. (Psalm 119 is the longest alphabetic psalm.)
- Follow this psalm's pattern as your own confession to God about his wonders and his faithfulness.
- Either: a) elaborate on the topics of each line (most versions break each verse into 2-3 lines following the Hebrew alphabetic phrases), or b) follow the English alphabet to talk to God about his care and his mighty deeds.
- Our faith- confidence in and commitment to the Lord -grows as we meditate on and interact with the holy God, who acts with power for his people. We confess and celebrate his past help to build up our faith for the next crisis, when we will depend on his help again.

.....

.....

.....

.....





WEEK 2\_DAY 1

# HALLOWED

## READ PSALM 96

### TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

When you hear the term “hallowed”, what comes to mind?

Majoring in history at college and being a former American history teacher, the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. is a dream come true. I love viewing the historical monuments like the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials. Honestly, I even cried a little the first time I saw the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence in the National Archives. But visiting Arlington National Cemetery and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is unlike any other experience

If you have never been, a soldier from the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment stands watch 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to guard the tomb. The Tomb Guard marches exactly 21 steps, turns, faces east for 21 seconds, turns and faces north for 21 seconds, then takes 21 steps and repeats the process. (The number 21 symbolizes the highest military honor that can be bestowed, the 21-gun salute.) Next, the soldier executes a sharp “shoulder-arms” movement to place the weapon on the shoulder closest to the visitors, signifying that he or she stands between the Tomb and any possible threat. Every hour, the military guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is changed in an elaborate ceremony as one soldier passes on the responsibility to the next. It truly is an amazing site to behold.

The precision of the soldiers’ movements, the seriousness of the task, the dedication to be on guard even in rain or snow all point to the sacred nature of this place. Even the sense of respect and reverence of the crowd watching in absolute silence is tangible.

### REFLECT AND PRAY

- What does it mean for me to hallow God’s name?
- Do I approach God with absolute reverence and respect for who he is and what he has already done - sacrificing Jesus’s life so that I might have freedom?
- Ask the Lord to work in you to prize his name to the degree that he does. Ask him to show you how to act on this request.



## READ PSALM 23

No one likes to have his or her name forgotten, misspelled, or mispronounced. Our names are part of our identity and individual worth. We value having a “good name,” that is, a blameless reputation. In a similar way, God’s name speaks of his identity, his character, and his actions. When David says, “He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake,” he is referring to God’s action of hallowing his name in the way he guides us. God’s guidance in our lives is for him to receive the glory.

***“But I acted for the sake of my name, so that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out [of Egypt].”***

–Ezekiel 20:14 ESV

God’s name—his character and reputation—must be set apart as holy in this world, and that is what Jesus teaches us to pray for.

Your attitudes, words, actions, and even social media posts all are representations to the world of your God. How well are you doing in making God’s name holy by your lifestyle choices? Ask the Holy Spirit to keep you in step with Jesus, walking in the paths he marked out in Scripture.

## REFLECT AND PRAY

- How will you pray today for God’s name to supersede any of your own wants or needs?
- As you did last week, unburden yourself to the Lord because he cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).
- Confess to Yahweh that he is your portion, and you have no good apart from him (Psalm 16:2, 5).

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....





**READ PSALM 111**

Though we don't see it much in our Bible, the name "Yahweh" is common in the Hebrew Old Testament. In the English versions of the Bible, it's usually rendered in all capitals (or small caps) as "LORD." Genesis tells the story of creation by "God" (elohim in Hebrew) as the background to the same deity revealing himself to a special people- the family of Sarah and Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). "Yahweh" was the distinguishing name by which the children of Israel came to know their God. There's a peculiar story when Yahweh explained why he wanted to be called that.

In Exodus 3, Moses encountered God at a burning bush. God informed Moses that it was time to free the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery. Eventually, Moses asked God what to call him. God responded, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" (Exodus 3:14) The Hebrew of these verses used the ordinary verb that meant "to be" in the place we might have expected a name. Who is Israel's God? Yahweh- "He is."

It might sound strange, but Yahweh is an image-conscious name. Yahweh refuses to have rival gods or even physical representations of him. Yahweh likes his people to use his name but not in any way that reflects badly on his character (Exodus 20:1-7).

Because of that, a Jewish tradition of avoiding the name altogether developed. Rather than saying Yahweh, pious Jews would say Adonai, meaning "master" or "Lord."

**REFLECT AND PRAY**

- Read Proverbs 9:10.
- Do you have a reverent fear of the LORD?
- Ask Yahweh, the Self-Existent One, for a healthy, reverent fear. No doubt, he is far beyond what we have ever imagined. Acknowledge aloud to Yahweh how magnificent he is.
- What inadequate view of Yahweh have you held in your heart that he would replace with revelation?

.....

.....

.....

.....



WEEK 2\_DAY 5

# THE NAME FOR YOU

### READ EXODUS 3:14

I Am... I Am... I am what? It seems like there is a blank that needs to be filled in, doesn't it?

But God cannot be contained by any single description or characteristic. Throughout Scripture he is given many different names that reveal different aspects of God's nature. Take some time to meditate on these different names of God.

### CIRCLE THE NAMES OF GOD THAT SPEAK TO YOUR HEART TODAY

Yahweh-Jireh - "The Lord will provide" Genesis 22:14

Yahweh-Rapha - "The Lord who heals" Exodus 15:26

Yahweh-Nissi - "The Lord our banner" Exodus 17:15

Yahweh-M'Kaddesh - "The Lord who sanctifies" Leviticus 20:8

Yahweh-Shalom - "The Lord our peace" Judges 6:24

Yahweh-Elohim - "Lord God" Genesis 2:4, Psalm 59:5

Yahweh-Tsidkenu - "The Lord our righteousness" Jeremiah 33:16

Yahweh-Rohi - "The Lord our shepherd" Psalm 23:1

Yahweh-Shammah - "The Lord is there" Ezekiel 48:35

### REFLECT AND PRAY

Imagine God is saying to you, "I AM \_\_\_\_\_", and he is allowing you to fill in the blank space with what you need him to be for you today. Hear him say to you, "I AM whatever you need."

## I AM

FATHER	PURPOSE	PEACE
FORGIVENESS	PROVISION	HEALER
PROTECTOR	SECURITY	_____

- *Spend a few minutes meditating on the names above. Quiet your heart for a minute or two and wait in God's presence.*





WEEK 3\_DAY 1

# KINGDOM HOPE

## READ LUKE 11:2

Have you ever prayed, “God restore your kingdom on the earth?” Maybe not in so many words, but we all get frustrated with our individual situation or the world situation. We would like Christ to return and make it all better. Whether it’s the coronavirus pandemic, the downturn in the economy, or riots and looting in the streets, it sure would be nice to hear that trumpet blow and see that lightning in the eastern sky that would solve all of our problems. Only God himself knows the time of Christ’s return, but is that what he had in mind when he told his disciples to pray this prayer? What if he meant to pray that our individual world might be like his kingdom? That we live our daily lives as subjects of the King? The world around us will resemble God’s kingdom more when our individual lives are ruled by the King.

## REFLECT AND PRAY

- What areas in our world need God’s kingdom to descend?
- In what areas of your own life do you need to allow God to reign more fully?
- **Prayer** – Dear God, help me today to live my life like you want me to live. You are my Father, my Lord, and my King. I want to do my best today to be an ambassador for your kingdom. I bow to your will and ask you to show me opportunities to do your will today. Amen.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



WEEK 3\_DAY 2

# ASKING AND TAKING ACTION

## READ MATTHEW 7:24

Every Christian would love to know the details of God's plan for her/his life. It has to be one of the most-asked questions by committed followers of Christ. How do I learn what God wants me to choose among these good options? Just think- if you were deciding on a career and God made it clear you were to be a teacher. Maybe even a middle school algebra teacher. In Burseson, Texas. And perhaps he would make it abundantly clear whom you would marry, what house to buy, and how many children to have, etc., etc. In my 70 years of life, I have agonized over so many important decisions and prayed that God would reveal his will for them. I have to say that sometimes I really felt a call, or the situation made the decision easy. Unfortunately, far too many times I felt like I was flying by the seat of my pants. The time came to make the move, apply for the job, pick the investment, and so forth, and God seemed silent. As they say, "Hindsight is 20/20", and looking back it is much easier to see how God worked than to be assured of how he might work in the days ahead. So how do we pray for God's will to be done in our lives?

## READ MATTHEW 7:21-27

God's will is mostly practicing the good that we already know, trying to conform our lives to Jesus's teachings. Jesus said "all these other things will be added to you as well" when we get the important things right.

## REFLECT AND PRAY

- How has God revealed his will for your life in the past?
- In what ways are you currently seeking the Lord's will for your life?
- **Prayer** - Heavenly Father, we earnestly desire to know and do your will. Quiet our hearts and minds that we might hear from you. Speak to us through your word, through others, and through the circumstances you place in our lives. Amen.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



# NOT EASY BUT NOT ALONE

## READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-9

The apostle Paul sounds as though he would have loved to see God's kingdom come. And yet, he knew that God had promised his protection for Paul's ministry. I'm sure that there are many times when we feel just like Paul must have. He had great power from the Holy Spirit to do all sorts of miracles and yet people didn't believe his message. Even believers that he trusted fell away from the faith. I'm sure Paul was anxious for God's kingdom to come, just as he was desirous of God's will in his ministry. When we ask for God's will in our lives, he is faithful to send the Holy Spirit to assure that we are not in despair, struck down, abandoned, nor destroyed.

## REFLECT AND PRAY

- Do you currently feel hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, or struck down?
- Have you prayed for the reassuring presence of the Holy Spirit in your circumstances?
- **Prayer** - Dear God, thank you for your Holy Spirit. Please answer us fast and unmistakably when we feel abandoned and in despair. We trust you to meet our every need and to be our shield and our strength. Amen.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....





WEEK 3\_DAY 5

# MIRACLES FOR ORDINARY PEOPLE

***“You are: way maker, miracle worker, promise keeper, light in the darkness! Our God, that is who you are!”*** – song “Way Maker” by Leeland

We have often sung these powerful words in our corporate worship times at Alsbury. That is indeed the God we serve. When we seek his will in our lives, he is faithful to make a way when there seems to be none. God will get us through this current viral pandemic, even when the outlook is bleak. He is still in the miracle business. We have seen many examples and should trust that he is capable of many more. God’s word is full of promises that he has kept for centuries. We shouldn’t doubt that he will continue. Our world seems like a very dark place sometimes, but Jesus said that we are the light of the world. His light shining through us can make a real difference today. All these descriptions of God are examples of his will for us- what he wants to do in and through us.

## REFLECT AND PRAY

- Read John 15:7-11. Notice what a disciple is to do and what Jesus promised to do.
- What do you need from God today? Do you need him to make a way, perform a miracle, fulfill a promise, provide light in a specific dark space? Are you praying for it?
- **Prayer** – Oh Lord, you are still working miracles, and your promises are true. Show us today how you want to shine your light through us into a darkened world. Make us your witnesses to do your will and spread your word so that your kingdom may indeed come on earth. Amen.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....





WEEK 4\_DAY 1

## ONE DAY AT A TIME

There are six petitions in the Lord's Prayer. The first three relate to God: his name, his kingdom, and his will. The second three requests have to do with meeting our needs. The principle being taught is God first; and us second. What is the first request regarding our needs? **Bread.**

Understanding this petition is the key for winning over worry. We all worry. What do you worry about most? Your kids, finances, job, school, health, weight, schedule? God doesn't want us to be all stressed out with worry. That's why Jesus gives us the secret for winning over worry.

When Jesus says to pray, Give us this day our daily bread, he is teaching us God wants to meet all our needs. **The Bible promises:** God will meet (supply) all our needs, not our wants, because there are times when we want things we don't need, and there are also times when we need things we don't want. God wants to meet all our needs not our greeds.

### WE MUST LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME

Jesus did not say we are to pray, "Give us our yearly bread, monthly bread, or even weekly bread." He said we are to pray: Give us this day our daily bread. In other words, we are to live one day at a time. As someone has said, "God has promised us his grace for all our tomorrows, but he didn't promise tomorrow's grace for today." One of the greatest promises in the Bible is "your strength will equal your days" (Deuteronomy 33:25).

According to this verse, God will give us the strength to live each day he gives us to live, but nowhere in the Bible does he promise tomorrow's strength today.

### REFLECT AND PRAY

Read Philippians 4:6. Reflect on the day ahead of you. What do you need in order to keep your commitments? Ask the Father to supply all of it, from supplies, help from others, finances, food, to mental focus, etc.

Resolve, with the Spirit's help, to seek God's kingdom with all your might today without worrying about the stuff God can provide for you.



# TOMORROW'S TROUBLES

**READ MATTHEW 6:34**

When the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness, God wanted to teach them to rely on him for their daily needs. So, he sent them manna from heaven. How much did he send them? Enough for a month? A week? How much? Moses told them, "Let no man leave it till the morning" (Exodus 16:19). However, paying no attention to Moses, some of the Israelites kept part of the manna until morning. The result was not good (v. 20).

Rather than enjoying today, many of us worry about tomorrow. Worry is interest paid on trouble before it is due. Worry is such a part of our lives that Jesus devoted almost one-seventh of the Sermon on the Mount to that subject. Worry is an effective weapon of the Evil One because it drains our energy, making us too tired to serve God. God wants us to enjoy life. He wants us to enjoy our family, our jobs, our homes—everything.

Read Matthew 6:34 and Psalm 118:24. Worry is different from making a plan. Making a plan means taking action today to prepare for tomorrow. Worry means to think about what could go wrong tomorrow and to choose that fear over taking action.

**REFLECT AND PRAY**

- Talk to God about his goodness on display today. To stir your gratitude, you might reflect on someone or something each hour of the day for which to thank the Lord.
- As you think about tomorrow, ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom for deciding how to take action on the matters that would otherwise worry you. After asking for wisdom, make a plan and do something about it. Check on your plan tomorrow and thank God for wisdom and strength to accomplish good.

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



**READ 1 PETER 5:7**

By telling us to pray, Give us this day our daily bread, Jesus is teaching us that our heavenly Father cares about the small things in our lives. Our heavenly Father cares for the ordinary, day-to-day things in our lives. Sometimes we act as if God only cares about the big problems in our lives, but we don't need to have a life-threatening problem to ask for God's help.

God wants to be involved in our small, everyday problems. Those are what most often discourage us. The small things wear us down. As someone has said, "I would rather be swallowed by a whale than nibbled to death by minnows." Well, God cares about the "nibbling minnows" in our lives. God wants to meet our everyday needs because God wants us to depend on him daily.

**READ 1 PETER 5:7 AGAIN, ADDING IN VERSE 6 WITH IT.**

How many of our cares and problems are we to cast on him? All! The word translated cast means "to throw upon." It is the idea of throwing our worries to the Lord and leaving them there. Too many of us cast our anxiety as we do a fishing line; we cast our worries and then reel them back. However, we are to cast them to God's throne and leave them there.

Praying about our problems doesn't mean they will go away, but it does remind us of our heavenly Father's involvement. A big part of prayer is involving God in our problems, small ones and large ones.

**REFLECT AND PRAY**

Humble yourself under God's mighty hand by telling him about all the little things that nibble at you or worry you. Our Father hasn't said not to bother him with the things we should be able to handle on our own. Whatever concerns us, concerns him. Give him the honor of answering his child's prayers today- it brings him glory (John 15:67-8).

.....

.....

.....

.....



# SATISFIED OR CRAVING

God loves us more than we can imagine, and he loves to meet our daily needs because he wants to be involved in our daily lives.

God has so blessed us that we have become much like the Israelites, whom God miraculously provided with manna in the desert. First, they stopped thanking him. Then, they quit asking him for his provision of daily bread, and third, they began to grumble and resent not having more. At that point, they began to think about the cucumbers, melons, and leeks they had in Egypt, while forgetting about the oppression, slavery, and brutality. They grumbled about having to eat manna for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Though it could be prepared in many, tasty ways, they complained: "But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes" (Numbers 11:6). They wanted meat instead. So, the Lord told them he would give them meat for a whole month, until it came out their nostrils and they hated it (Numbers 11:18b-20a). God wanted the Israelites to depend on him for their daily bread. He wants us to do the same.

**READ PSALM 78:17-31**

- Think about this story.
- Look at the result in v. 32.

Trusting God for our daily needs humbles us and kills pride. The more we have, the more we need to pray about our daily needs because material affluence can create pride and put us in greater spiritual danger.

**READ DEUTERONOMY 8:3-6**

Food leads us back to the Father. He's good and gives good gifts (James 1:17), but he also wants us to trust him and to love him more than we crave his gifts. Thank God for the days, months, and years he has provided for you.

**REFLECT AND PRAY**

- Ask the Holy Spirit if you have any cravings that he wants to replace with satisfaction in God's provision.
- Do you need to cut out something from your life today that stirs up the craving?
- Do you need to fast from something to replace it with loving union with Jesus?

---

---

---



WEEK 4\_DAY 5

# WHEN YOU HAVE A SURPLUS

## READ 1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19

Have you seen research about what Americans consider to be “enough” or “too much” wealth? Such studies are comically predictable. People who earn, say, \$100,000 a year don’t consider that enough. The studies find that people in almost every income bracket don’t think they have quite enough, and the people who have “too much” are always several levels up. Other people’s experience should teach us that wealth doesn’t have the power to make us content. That’s a gift (Ecclesiastes 5:18-6:3) and a discipline (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

All week, we have admitted our need for God to supply our daily bread, even though many of us have enough food to last for days in our homes. If you do not have a surplus of resources in your life, then spend time asking the Lord to give you contentment. Confess to him which desires spoil contentment in you.

## REFLECT AND PRAY

- If you have a surplus, read 1 Timothy 6:17-19.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into using your resources to do good for others daily, to free your heart and obligations to become rich in good works (not just rich), to make you generous and ready to share.
- Ask the Spirit to lead you to ministries, to causes, to families, etc., with whom you should share your surplus. Is there a specific amount God is telling you to prepare to give away? Write it down.
- Ask God to continue providing for you and for all of us in the Alsbury family, making us generous with the stuff our Lord has entrusted to us.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....





WEEK 5\_DAY 1

# LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

## READ MARK 12:31

We often overlook that there are three objects of love within these verses: God, your neighbor, and yourself.

Forgiving others who have hurt us can be incredibly challenging, but believing that we are forgiven can be difficult as well. There are many times we find the strength and generosity to forgive others, while sadly, we condemn ourselves to remain shackled with shame and guilt about our own sin. Replaying our mistakes in our minds can wear us out and keep us from fulfilling our full potential that God intends for us.

Jesus commands us to “love our neighbors as ourselves” but if we haven’t fully grasped how wide, how deep, how long, and how high God’s love is for us, it can be difficult to grasp how much we should love others.

If we are not at peace with who we are in Christ and have not fully accepted that we, too, are worthy of his forgiveness, our burden can stifle our mission to love, forgive, and guide others to Christ.

We should allow Jesus’ forgiveness of our sins to be enough, acknowledging that his love is for everyone, including ourselves!

## REFLECT & PRAY

- Are there things in your life for which you feel condemned, things for which you feel a need to atone for yourself, or things for which you could/should never be forgiven?
- As you pray today, seek God’s perception of how great His love is for you and surrender your self-imposed burdens upon him. Reflect on Jesus’s death for your sins- it was enough. Try to imagine Jesus saying, “It is finished” – about all the guilt, shame, and regret you feel.
- Ask the Father to give you faith to trust that his forgiveness is final, so that you can experience his peace.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



## READ ROMANS 5:3-4

Kintsugi is a Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by mending cracks with gold and even though it is broken, the pottery becomes more valuable because of its rich and precious scars.

Many of us have deep-rooted wounds that we have nursed for many years. As with any wound, especially the deep ones, we must be patient as they heal. Often though, we find a bit of comfort in ignoring our bitterness, anger, and resentment, or we feel that we should get revenge for the wrong that has taken place. But God is a patient God! His love for us is eternal, so he has plenty of time to wait!

When Peter asked Jesus how many times he must forgive someone, Jesus replied, "Not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:21-22). Sometimes as we heal, we are surrounded by the same person who wounded us. Sometimes that person has long been removed. In either instance, each time we forgive, even if it is just a little bit, our wounds are filled with squiggles of gold that God uses to refine us and reshape us. Even though our relationship with that person may never be restored, what is important is that we are doing our part to mend our brokenness and restore our relationship with God.

Each time we allow God to fill our wounds with his precious gifts, we become more useful for his purposes and more valuable to others. God will use our treasured scars—whether it is one or seventy times seven—to strengthen our faith, to build our character, and to bring us hope. One day, we will be completely healed.

### Reflect & Pray

- Ask God to help you model his forgiveness, for his name's sake, so that he can be recognized and glorified.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



# THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO

**READ LUKE 23:34**

As Christians, we are held to a high standard by the world. We are watched and constantly being evaluated as to how we act and what we say. The world's expectations of Christians often do not align with the imperfect people we are. That sets up an atmosphere for conflict and tension and leaves room for resentment and broken relationships. It often puts us in a position to be defensive, instead of forgiving.

But we must realize that many in the world know not what they do. They do not understand that there is no condemnation for those in Christ. They do not know that even though we are perfect in the Father, we are imperfect in the flesh.

But we as believers do know! And God does expect different behavior from us. Because we have experienced his grace, we can forgive completely as God forgives us.

The best example we can be for those who do not know Christ fully, is to show them the mercy and grace that Christ himself shows us. People know when there is unforgiveness in our hearts, especially when it is towards them. And because Jesus shows us no condemnation, neither should we condemn them. It should be easier for us to forgive because we know who gets the glory! We should forgive so that when people see us, they see who Jesus is.

**REFLECT AND PRAY**

- Are there groups, communities, or individuals with whom you find it difficult to maintain harmony?
- What thoughts, attitudes, actions can you change in order to demonstrate God's love for them?
- Ask God to help you model his forgiveness for his name's sake, so that he can be recognized and glorified.

.....

.....

.....

.....



WEEK 5\_DAY 4

# MORE THAN CONQUERORS

## READ 1 JOHN 4:4

“The thief’s purpose is to steal, kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life” (John 10:10). Satan would like nothing better than to steal our joy, kill our relationships, and destroy the good that God intends when we restore the fellowship that has been lost.

The Spirit’s work in our lives results in peace, joy, and unity. Satan will do anything to keep us from experiencing those pleasures. Satan is a liar, who whispers in our ear that it is impossible to forgive. He taunts us with the pain of offense committed against us. He antagonizes us with the lies of betrayal and deceit. The enemy wants nothing more than to keep us separated from those we do life with because when we are isolated, we are easy prey. “The enemy prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

But no, in all these things we are more than conquerors in Christ. (Romans 8:37). God has equipped us and empowered us to stand against the schemes of the devil. He has given us full armor and stands with us on the front lines of battle.

When Jesus gave up his spirit on the cross, the curtain to the temple was torn, the earth shook, rocks split, and tombs were opened (Matthew 27:51). At that moment, we were guaranteed that nothing will ever separate us from his love or his power. Christ’s suffering and resurrection broke Satan’s hold and empowered us with the Holy Spirit to overcome the enemy.

## REFLECT & PRAY

Praying God’s word back to him, is a powerful weapon against the enemy. Today, focus on his Truth as you pray these Scriptures back to God:

**James 4:6-7 • Ephesians 6:11-18 • Philippians 4:13**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



WEEK 5\_DAY 5

# PRAY FOR YOUR ENEMIES

## READ LUKE 6:27-28

*"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36).* It can be hard to want to show mercy to those who have hurt us greatly. But what the enemy means for evil, God will use for good.

Prayer is the most powerful good we can do when we feel nothing but pain. We have all fallen short of God's glory at times. Yet God, in his grace, makes us right in his sight (Romans 3:23-24). And because we have been made righteous, we have the power to act on behalf of others. "Do not withhold good for those who deserve it when it's in your power to act" (Proverbs 3:27). We pray and take action.

Loving God and loving others means acting in their best interest. God wants us all to be reconciled to himself and to each other. So, when we pray for our enemies, we should not pray only that they will change. We should not pray for them to come crawling back to us with an apology. We should pray that we both will be changed. Praying for them the same way we pray for ourselves will make both of our joys complete.

When we pray blessings over our enemies, we start to see them differently. As God softens our hearts, our perspectives begin to change, and it becomes harder to stay mad. Most of all, when we pray for our enemies, we become more like Jesus, who "works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13).

## REFLECT & PRAY

- What past hurt are you still holding on to and need to release today? What specific person causes you distress, whom you find difficult to forgive?
- Lift that person up to the Lord today. Ask God for forgiving hearts, for increased love, and for a mutual compassion that moves you both closer to him.

.....

.....

.....

.....





# HOW JESUS HANDLED TEMPTATION

The Spirit led the Lord into the wilderness to experience temptation. Jesus did this to understand what we face on a regular basis. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that he was tempted in every way just like we are, yet he did not sin. So, let's investigate the types of temptations, what else may have been involved, and how Adam and Eve and Jesus handled each of them.

**Read the following scriptures and identify the types of temptations.**

GENESIS 3:6	MATTHEW 4:1-11/ LUKE 4:1-13	1 JOHN 2:16

The devil basically uses the same three categories of enticements. All four Scripture passages speak to luring us in the same ways: *the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life*. The three that Adam and Eve and that Jesus endured fit into the types.

**REFLECT & PRAY**

- With which of the three types of temptations does the enemy attack you most, i.e., which lust is the hardest for you?
- How does knowing these types help you deal with temptations?
- In 1 Timothy 2:13-14 and James 1:16, what else enters into the temptations?
- Reflecting on scripture, what are the differences between how Jesus, on the one hand, managed temptations, and how Adam and Eve—and we— do so?
- What do you need to do to alter your approach to temptations?

.....

.....

.....

.....



# A HEART FULLY DEVOTED

***A story is told—possibly as a Cherokee legend—of two wolves. A grandfather wanted to help the grandson decide between good and bad. He told his grandson a metaphor of two wolves that were fighting within him. Intrigued, the grandson asked which wolf wins. The grandfather answered, “the wolf you choose to feed.” Love for the world positions us against the Lord.***

Jesus prepared himself through fasting and prayer. He sought the Father’s will (Matthew 26:39). He depended on the Holy Spirit (Matthew 4:1; Luke 4:1). He quoted Scripture to counteract the enticements. He chose not to listen to the enemy.

James 1:5-8, 17-18 shows us God’s desires. The Father longs to bless us with his perfect gifts. Our “good-giving God” wants us to model his heart in seeking the best. He gave his best for us in Jesus Christ, so we can follow Jesus’ model of dealing with temptation.

In Hebrews 12:1-2, we see that some temptations come because we have developed habits that bag and drag us. Hebrews 12:1 gives the idea of what easily ensnares us. Verse 2 reminds us to fix our eyes on Jesus, who perfects our faith walk. Fastening our eyes on the Model of single-mindedness can keep our hearts fully devoted to the Lord and protect us from loving the world.

**REFLECT AND PRAY**

- James 4:1-4 and 1 John 2:15  
How does love of the world affect our choices?
- What do James 1:21 and 1 John 3:17 tell us to do with things of the world?
- Matthew 4:2 and Luke 4:2  
What did Jesus do before and when temptations arose?

---



---



---



---



---



---



WEEK 6\_DAY 3

# A WAY OF ESCAPE

## READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

Contrary to popular opinion, 1 Corinthians 10:13 does not teach, “God will not give us more trials than we can handle.” James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-5; and 1 Peter 1:5-9 teach just the opposite. Plus, in 1 Corinthians 10:13, the key word (Greek *peirasmos*) means temptation, not trials. So, 1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can handle. Instead, he provides an escape plan so that we can get past temptations.

One way of escape appears in John 6:15, 1 Corinthians 10:14, and 2 Timothy 2:22—flee! When possible, Jesus moved from the very location. Joseph also gave us an excellent example, when Potiphar’s wife wanted him to have an affair with her. He took off. Sometimes, that is the only way to handle the situation—get out of there.

Psalms 139:1-3 gives us another way. God knows our thoughts before we think them. We are to bring every thought captive to him obey (2 Corinthians 10:5). So, determining ahead of time to let the Lord control our thoughts will diminish our surrendering to temptations. Additionally, in Psalm 141:3-4 David asked God to “set a guard over my mouth” and “protect my heart from the inclination to do iniquity.”

We can depend on the Lord to take us from the area of temptations through his Spirit’s nudging. But we have to be ready to move. So, let’s put on our track shoes and be quick to sprint when temptations arise.

## REFLECT AND PRAY

Read the following passages:

***James 1:16, 25, 26; James 4:5-7; 1 Corinthians 10:13-14; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:22***

How do we evade falling prey to temptation? What steps do you need to take this week?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



# OTHER METHODS OF GOD'S HELP

**READ JOHN 17:15; ROMANS 8:26, 34.**

- What help is there for us in these verses? .....
- What comforts you in these verses? .....

Our Lord prays for us. Through his Spirit he intercedes for us at the throne of mercy where we can experience his good desire to help (Hebrews 4:16). The Spirit prays according to the Father's will. The Spirit pleads for us with groanings like a woman in childbirth. That is how much the Lord loves us and wants us to overcome our weaknesses! And God hears us as he did the sighs and anguish of the Israelite people in bondage in Egypt (Exodus 3:7).

In the following verses what other means does the Lord use to help with our compulsions?

- 1) Romans 8:1-5: .....
- 2) Galatians 5:23 (the last part of the fruit mentioned): .....
- 3) Ephesians 6:10: .....
- 4) 2 Thessalonians 3:3: .....
- 5) 2 Peter 2:7-10: .....

**REFLECT AND PRAY**

- As you meditate on these verses, ask the Lord to show you which of these methods you need the most right now.
- Seek his understanding for another one that you may not have developed well.
- Knock on the door of heaven and enter into fellowship with the Lord as he desires in Revelation 3:10.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



# OTHER METHODS OF GOD'S HELP

*Based on this week's studies, how can we make sense of the request, "lead us not into temptation"? How would you pray that in your own words?*

.....  
.....

It is possible that Jesus was using an equivalent to the expression, "Lead us away from evil," which included the idea we've considered this week: "Keep us from following our own frailties." If we do choose a temptation rather than to follow Jesus's ways, what should we do?

**READ**

- Psalm 141:3-4
- James 4:8-10
- Psalm 24:3-4

How do they guide us to respond to our own sin?.....

.....

The contexts of Matthew 6 and Luke 11 are the model prayer. So, as we seek to avoid yielding to temptation, we find our strength in depending on the Lord. Paul asked others to pray for him. The Lord went to the Father to overcome temptation. Additionally, the Lord prays for us. If we truly desire for the Lord's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, we must seek to be single-minded like the Father, focused in prayer on his will, and desiring to flee from evil lusts.

**REFLECT AND PRAY**

- Take some time to reflect on the Bible studies and devotionals.
- Write a prayer asking the Lord to help you overcome temptations, particularly the ones with which you always battle.

.....  
.....  
.....





WEEK 7\_DAY 1

# A SUBMITTED HEART

## READ DEUTERONOMY 6:5

In the study *The Remarkable Women of the Bible* by Elizabeth George, you quickly notice the similarity among all the women is their faith. They had trusting hearts- hearts drawn to God. Jim Cymbala said in *The Life God Blesses*, "inside the human heart is an undeniable, spiritual instinct to commune with the Creator". God seeks people with a willing spirit and obedient heart.

An obedient heart surrendered to God is necessary in order to follow him wherever he leads. "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters-yes, even their own life-such a person cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26). So the question arises, "Am I fully surrendered?" "What does full surrender look like?" "Do I have an obedient heart?"

**God answers these questions:** "Trust me, meet with me often, and I will show you."

He reminds us through the example of Abraham. When God called him to go from his country along with his family (Gen. 12:1-4) promising he would make Abraham a great nation, Abraham went, no questions asked. Abraham sought God intimately on many occasions. They were friends (James 2:23). Abraham knew God had promised an heir, but at age 100 this had not come to pass. But once again, God reminded Abraham that his very own son would be his heir. His offspring would be as many as there were stars in heaven (Gen. 15: 1-11). Abraham believed and it was counted as righteousness.

We should all want to be like Abraham: believing, obeying, and trusting a Holy God! Are we ready to yield in order to have a fully submitted heart?

## REFLECT AND PRAY

- Will you surrender today?
- Read each verse and pray through the different aspects of yielding yourself...

MY BODY	DANIEL 3:28	TRUST
MY HEART	HEBREWS 10:22	PURITY
MY SOUL	PSALM 62:1-2	STRENGTH
MY MIND	ROMANS 8:6	PEACE
MY LIFE	MARK 4:8	ABUNDANCE



WEEK 7\_DAY 2

# AN ABIDING HEART!

## READ JOHN 15:5

“You Get What You Give” was written on a business marquee one day as I was driving to work. It started me thinking about what I give... to what and whom do I give... how much do I give... why do I give? Sober thinking.

In the church world, we hear about giving usually in relation to tithing, giving 10% of your earnings to God. What about our talents, gifts, or skills? Serving God, others? What about time with God and others?

The question becomes about generosity. How generous am I with the money, time, and talent God has blessed me with? What motivates me to give, a desire for recognition or a desire for obedience to the Lord? Love should be the motivator. Paul says without LOVE I am as a banging gong (1 Corinthians 13:1). God commands us to give back...with love.

How then do I know what to give and how to give? The answer is simple...by giving him time...**ABIDING** (John 14:26).

***“I am the vine, you are the branches, apart from me you can do NOTHING!”***  
-John 15:5

***“Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things ... and will tell you about great and hidden things that you don't know.”***  
-Jeremiah 33:3

**ABIDE!** We must have consistent and persistent prayer time along with time in his word. Unless you are connected to the vine, you can do nothing because it is from the vine that branches get their sustenance. Abiding allows the fruit of God to grow in you.

## REFLECT AND PRAY

- Are you desiring more from your relationship with God... How much time are you giving?
- As the business marquee reminded me, “You Get What You Give.”
- Read John chapter 15 and reflect on what it means to ABIDE in Christ.

.....

.....

.....

.....



# A THANKFUL HEART!

## READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5: 17-18

I had a good job at Edward Jones. However, there was not a lot to do much of the time. Because of this I had "grumbled" to some close friends and my daughter how BORED I was sometimes. Shortly thereafter, the Lord so gently reminded me of something quite important. My belly-aching was a lot like that of the Israelites in Exodus 15-17.

Remember, the Israelites had been delivered by God through the miracle of parting the Red Sea, after a very long harsh season of captivity in Egypt. Then a mere three days later they "grumbled" over the fact that there was no water. God provided. Then later they went on to grumble about no food. So once again God provided manna, a wafer-like cracker, for breakfast and quail for dinner. What? Manna again! They were never satisfied and continued to be ungrateful to the Lord.

So here I was two years after an unexpected "exodus"; my marriage to an unbeliever had dissolved. During those two years, I found myself praying constantly, many times through tears. God reminded me that he was always with me. I grumbled . . . What was I going do? God provided assurance through Proverbs 16:9, He would direct my steps. I grumbled . . . But who would hire a 60 year old woman? God provided . . . a job with Edward Jones. And still I grumbled . . . I am bored . . . if only . . . WAIT! Father, I confess my sin of ungratefulness! Help me remember all you do for me!

How quickly our focus is misplaced! The enemy wants to poison our relationship with our Holy, merciful and loving Heavenly Father, who lavishes his love upon us (1 John 3:1). Oh, what a glorious God we serve! May we never forget ALL he does for us.

## READ PSALM 103

### REFLECT AND PRAY

- Are you prone to see the negatives over the positives and grumble over your circumstances?
- Take time to write down your blessings and reflect on God's goodness, thankful for his presence and provision.

.....

.....

.....



# A PERSISTENT HEART

## READ REVELATION 4:11

The Lord's Prayer is found in Matthew 6 and Luke 11, however there are four verses in Luke not included in Matthew. The emphasis is on the persistence of a neighbor needing food for an unexpected guest. His grumpy neighbor was annoyed for being interrupted during the night.

How does this apply to our prayer life? When I first read the scripture in Luke 11:5-8, I thought it was saying that we can pray the same prayer enough times that the Lord finally relents. From personal experience this actually does happen! Yet, the bigger truth slowly emerged as I sought the Lord during my morning prayer times.

It's about God! His availability. His goodness. His holiness. His patience. All the attributes that I am not. My perspective changed at that moment. The all-knowing, all-powerful, ever present, Holy One is worthy and to be praised first and foremost! He is always there. What a blessing!

Persistent prayer is not necessarily about praying the same prayer over and over. Instead it is about coming before God constantly. Morning, noon, night. Anytime. All the time. He wants to spend time with me because he loves me. More time with him teaches me more about him.

Persistent prayer reveals the relationship we have with God. He is worthy, we are needy. We realize that he is the only one who can meet us exactly where we are. Then and only then will we understand the necessity of persistent prayer.

## REFLECT AND PRAY

- How quickly do you tire of repeating a prayer request when it is not answered immediately?
- How can you become more persistent in your prayer life?

***Because he has inclined his ear to me,  
Therefore I shall call upon him as long as I live.*** -Psalm 116:2 ESV

- *God, help me to recognize my absolute need of you which in turn requires my constant seeking of you. May I never tire of petitioning my loving Father.*

.....  
.....



WEEK 7\_DAY 5

# A HUNGRY HEART

## READ MATTHEW 6:33

In the parable of the persistent neighbor there was a desperate need. An unexpected guest arrived at a very inconvenient time. There was no bread in the house. So the homeowner went next door to borrow some food. The next door neighbor was not happy to be awakened in the middle of the night by his unprepared neighbor. Yet because of the persistence of the neighbor, he filled the need. However, if the first neighbor had been prepared, bread would have been available for the hungry guest.

Let's say the house represents our hearts. When the unexpected visitor arrives, the host is desperate to provide hospitality to the visitor. How desperate are we to accommodate the Lord into our hearts and lives even if it might be inconvenient or disruptive to our routine. If we are in the Word consistently and praying persistently, our hearts will be better prepared when the "unexpected" occurs. Let's commit today to always be ready!

## REFLECT AND PRAY

- Feast upon these verses from God's word and be filled with his truth. Take the time to read and pray through each verse, focusing on the promise of God that he will always satisfy your soul.
  - Psalm 42:2 ***"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?"***
  - Psalm 46:10 ***"Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth."***
  - Psalm 81:10 ***"I, the Lord, am your God, Who brought you up from the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide and I will fill it."***
  - Matthew 5:6 ***"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled."***
  - John 6:35 ***Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger and he who believes in Me will never thirst."***
  - James 4:8 ***"Draw near to God and He will draw near."***





WEEK 8\_DAY 1

# ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

## READ MATTHEW 7:7

If you look up the word “ask” in a dictionary, the definition is to say something in order to obtain an answer or gather some information. To “seek” is an attempt to find something or to ask for something from someone. And to “knock” is a sound caused by a blow, especially on a door to attract attention or gain entry.

So, Jesus tells us in his word to come to God in prayer and ask for what we need. And when we ask it is his desire to meet our needs. This allows us to have an expectation of our prayer being answered. But note that he requires that we be willing to ask. Then, he also instructs us to seek him. He wants us to pursue him and his ways persistently, to get to know and understand him personally. Not to just say a prayer here and there in a moment of need, but to keep a dialog going with him. It’s much like the one you may have with a best friend— often engaging in conversation with each other and enjoying one another’s company. God desires that kind of relationship with us.

Isaiah 55, verse 8 reads: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.” So, we must allow God into our life on a regular basis and be constantly seeking him to ever grasp what his thoughts and ways might be about. It will be necessary for us to dig into his word and ask him to reveal to us what he intends for us to do with what he teaches us. This would be our knocking, our attempt to attract God’s attention that we are serious about gaining entry into what his and our existence is really all about.

## REFLECT AND PRAY

God is a teacher who is always ready to teach. The question lies with us. Are we willing to “Ask,” “Seek,” and “Knock”?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**READ 2 KINGS 18:6**

There was a time when King Hezekiah had become ill to the point of death (2 Kings 20). He was a man who truly trusted in God. While on his deathbed, the prophet Isaiah came to Hezekiah with a message from God that he would die from his sickness. He should get his affairs in order.

Having faith and believing God could answer prayer, Hezekiah's response was to pray, immediately. He prayed, "Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes." (2 Kings 20:3). We know he turned to God swiftly because the Bible tells us that the prophet Isaiah, before he had completely left the palace courtyard, had received another message from God for Hezekiah. Returning to Hezekiah he delivered the second message saying, "God has heard your prayer, has seen your tears, and he will heal you. He will also add 15 years to your life."

What if Hezekiah had not prayed? What if he had not trusted God's ability to heal and had no expectation of an answer? Would the outcome be the same? And what an outcome he received! He wanted to live. But God gave more, in abundance, with 15 more years of life!

I find myself wondering if I possess the intimacy in relationship that Hezekiah had with God. God's Word teaches that answers to prayer come in God's timing. Even so, I can't help but feel I need to work on my responsibilities in reference to prayer, review them, practice them more.

Am I, as a disciple, faithfully following God with wholehearted devotion: holding fast to him, never ceasing to follow him and following his commands? I certainly want to. My desire is to believe, trust, serve, and be expectant of the one true God who can answer a prayer like he answered Hezekiah's.

**REFLECT AND PRAY**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



WEEK 8\_DAY 3

# OUR WILL, GOD'S WILL

The Bible teaches that when we pray to God, we should lay our need or desire at his feet and have anticipation of an answer. If done with the right attitude we are exhibiting faith and trust.

It's often difficult to "hand over" whatever we are dealing with and let God make the final decision. This is especially true when we're pretty sure of OUR preferred outcome, one we think we can produce. We humans really want what we want; this is our personal will's response to life. But our perspective is limited to our human thoughts and abilities. When we submit a prayer to God, we get an awesome upgrade of perspective since God knows EVERYTHING! He knows the bigger picture of our life and is always ready to give us answers that lead to what's best.

Sometimes, upon praying, we get "no" as an answer. It may feel wrong, even hurt and be hard to accept. That "no" to our will opens us up to the "yes" of whatever God's will is for us. Our relationship with God needs to be refined and intimate, so we're willing to submit to his will for our lives. Whether we always understand or not, we should learn to trust him.

In Luke Chapter 22, Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane the night he was soon to be betrayed, arrested, and then hung on the cross. He prayed a prayer pleading with his Father to avoid the torture and death that awaited him. Then he ended his prayer saying: "not as I will, but as you will." Jesus expressed his desires to God, but his ultimate desire was to do whatever God wanted him to do. Jesus was not without hope of an answer. His Relationship with his Father was so close he had no doubt an answer would come. We need to develop a relationship of that nature with God for ourselves. Jesus trusted God would give his best answer. And he did. Aren't you grateful? I am!

May God help us accept and grasp an understanding about our will and his, as we work toward them becoming one.

## REFLECT AND PRAY

.....

.....

.....



WEEK 8\_DAY 4

## RED SEA EVENTS

Don't we sometimes find ourselves in positions where we're scared to death about something? Which direction do we go? We ask ourselves "how do we fix" whatever problem is before us? Have you ever been guilty of hitting the "panic button" in life? I certainly have ...many times to be honest.

In Exodus 14, Moses was leading the Israelites through the wilderness as the Egyptian armies were pursuing them. Standing before the vast Red Sea with no way to cross it, the Israelites became very fearful. Moses told them to "fear not" and to "stand firm in their faith" for the Lord would fight for them and meet their needs. God instructed Moses to lift his rod and stretch out his hand over the sea and divide it. The Israelites were able to walk on dry ground to safety in the same place the water had just been flowing. God had heard their cries for help and responded.

We all have had overwhelming circumstances at times. We wonder how we could possibly handle what is before us. Like the Israelites, we feel as if we will drown in our situation. But in those desperate times, we are not without hope. We remember our identity, a child of God, and hope reappears. We can take that particular "Red Sea" event before the Lord to see how he will part the waters of life.

### REFLECT AND PRAY

- What should we do when faced with "Red Sea" moments in life?
- Colossians 4:2 reminds us to "Devote yourself to prayer, being watchful and thankful."
- Even though that verse is short, it provides three responsibilities to fulfill. First, to approach God in PRAYER about any issue. Second is to WATCH, to be expectant of a response from God. And the third responsibility is to THANK him for his leadership and guidance.
- I'm so grateful for God's patience, mercy, and grace as I work toward being a person who skips the "panic button" of life and ALWAYS runs to him first.
- How about you?

---

---

---

---

---



# A FERVENT PRAYER

Have you ever prayed fervently for something; entering prayer being very enthusiastic and passionate about the request you're bringing before the Lord, having faith, knowing, and trusting that God himself is the one who can bring the right resolve to whatever you are laying before Him? And after that prayer are you expectant that God will answer?

Hannah did! We find her story in 1 Samuel. She was married but was barren. Being barren was a social embarrassment in the day and time in which she lived. Hannah's situation was so emotionally upsetting that at times she didn't even eat. But there came a day when Hannah decided that the circumstances that she had been living in had to change.

Hannah went to the temple. And in 1 Samuel 1:10 it says "In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord." In prayer, she became very enthusiastic and passionate about her request for a child. Take notice that Hannah didn't let the pain or fears of her situation keep her from God's house. She was a person of faith and knew her God had the answer for her painful circumstances.

The priest of the temple, Eli, saw Hannah as she wept and prayed. He observed her lips moving but could not hear any words. He concluded she may be drunk with wine and confronted her. Hannah assured him she was not drunk, but a woman deeply troubled and pouring out her soul.

God answered Hannah's prayer. In his timing, Hannah had several children. Her life illustrates that our God does hear and answer the prayers of those who come to him in faith.

## REFLECT AND PRAY

- Hannah's story makes me reflect on my own prayer life. Am I as expectant of an answer from God as I should be? I definitely do pray, but am I following that up with the expectancy that is available to me? I do want all that God has made available to me. Don't you?
- Are you expecting God to intervene in your difficult life circumstances?

.....

.....

.....

.....





WEEK 9\_DAY 1

# SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

## READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:21

People who describe hearing from the Holy Spirit will use different words to describe it: impressions, information, nudges, ideas, or other terms.

### GUIDANCE

- For our purposes, let's define "guidance" as impressions, information, nudges, ideas of things the Holy Spirit is imparting to our conscious mind.

### DISCERNMENT

- Discernment would be the task of reflecting, and deciding if it is reliable and accurate.
- Discernment is incredibly important because our emotions, opinions, experiences and presuppositions can mislead us.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR RECEIVING GUIDANCE FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. Does it give glory to Jesus Christ in the present and in the future?  
**(John 14:26, John 16:13-14, 1 John 4:2-3).**  
God is not in the business of sharing his glory with any person or thing.
  2. Is it consistent with the intentions and character of God as revealed in Scripture?  
**(John 2:22, 2 Timothy 3:14-17, Acts 17:11).**  
God spoke Scripture and preserved it through the years for a reason. And it should be a consistent guide.
  3. Do other people who are filled with the Holy Spirit have a confirming witness?  
**(1 Corinthians 14:29, Acts 15:28).**  
God designed us to be in fellowship, and he gives us one another for all sorts of accountability.
  4. Is there confirmation in objectively verifiable events or facts?  
**(Deuteronomy 18:21-22, Isaiah 55:10-11).**  
He intentionally gave us our intellect, our senses and ability to observe.
- If we do discern that the guidance is accurate and on track, how do we respond?
  - If it is unclear, ask and seek other trusted friends to discern together.
  - Do you agree with the four principles listed above for discernment?
  - Do you think there should be others?



WEEK 9\_DAY 2

## INTERCEDING FOR PEOPLE AND THINGS

### READ GALATIANS 6:2

Today, let's reflect on the word "intercession". We are using intercession for "prayer that is informed by the Holy Spirit's guidance and/or prayer that is intentionally asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance".

It has been the experience of many believers that the Holy Spirit will give you strong impressions of things going on in another person's life, perhaps things which have never been expressed.

If you have sensed that God has given you a particular spiritual burden for a person, a situation, a place or a thing, it is completely reliable to ask him to give you guidance via the Holy Spirit.

### REFER TO THE FOUR-FOLD DISCERNMENT TEST FROM DAY 1.

The input of teammates in prayer can be very helpful. This is not an opportunity for gossip. Teammates should be those who humbly agree to the same mutual submission and rules of discernment as you.

As you pray, is this something you are being invited to pray for, to speak about, or to take some form of action? If in doubt, continue to pray.

There will be situations when someone invites you to pray for them.

Rarely should this be done one-on-one.

As you pray and receive guidance, it is proper to gently ask, "I'm getting a sense that.... <insert general guidance>. Is that on track?"

Don't be surprised if, at some time, the Holy Spirit connects you to the heart of God—how he feels about the situation, or to the heart of the person—experiencing some of their experience...both as a way of enabling your prayers.

Remember, this is an operation of the Holy Spirit. Any temptations to pride connected with "being a person of prayer" are sin and can lead to great harm.

1. Have you ever felt compelled to intentionally pray for someone or something?
2. How do your experiences line up with this description?
3. Is God calling you to explore this, and what steps would you take to grow in this area?



WEEK 9\_DAY 3

## DREAMS AND VISIONS

### READ ACTS 2:17

Over time I have asked many individuals if at any time they felt God was trying to impress an idea or communicate with them in a dream. A remarkable number of people would agree that this has been their experience. In most cases, they responded by praying about it privately. Unfortunately, few churches have a context where people can sort this out.

The Bible speaks to the reality of God speaking through dreams (Acts 2:17) and contains many examples.

In some occasions God “overwhelms” a person with his presence when he wasn’t invited. This could be said of Saul’s encounter with God on the Road to Damascus. (Acts 9; 22; 26).

And in the present day, God is revealing himself in dreams and visions—many times in closed or persecuted countries—appearing as a Man in White, drawing people to Himself.

It is equally common for the Holy Spirit to speak where he is invited. For those who already know Jesus as Savior, we can still experience a function of the Holy Spirit as he communicates the purposes of the Father in dreams and visions.

It begins with a life committed to purity and holiness.

It continues with inviting the Holy Spirit, giving permission, to speak to you in this way.

A reliable prayer might be, “God I know you desire communion and relationship with me. I desire to know you more. If it is your intention I surrender my imagination to you and invite you to communicate with me in this way. I know that this creates vulnerability, and I am trusting you to protect me as I submit.”

If and when God speaks in this way, all the previous principles of discernment and teamwork should be utilized.

1. Do you believe God has ever spoken to you this way, given your impressions in a dream or a vision?
2. If so, what was your response? How did it go?
3. Based on the ideas discussed, what would you do differently?



WEEK 9\_DAY 4

# INTERCEDING FOR MEETINGS

## READ ROMANS 8:26

Intercession can take a wide variety of forms that are helpful to the church and God's people. We will explore interceding for a meeting or event.

You may feel drawn to praying for something like a Sunday morning worship service.

### HERE ARE A FEW THOUGHTS:

1. The Holy Spirit can nudge you in several types of spiritual realities, and draw you into any number of assignments.
2. This can include praying specifically for the Pastor—that the Pastor is anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak God's particular truth for the context.
3. God may also call you to pray for those who are listening—even specific people whom he is trying to draw deeper into relationship with himself.
4. He may also lead you to pray against spiritual distractions. It is possible that God will invite you to pray against spiritual distractions of all sorts.

Like any other form of intercession, it is always better if we work in teams for the purpose of accountability and protection (often from ourselves).

### IN THIS CONTEXT, YOU ARE UNDER THE SPECIFIC AUTHORITY OF THE PASTOR.

- Always ask permission.
  - Always ask if the Pastor wants to receive feedback, how and when.
  - Always submit to the directions you are given. Remember, many times the Holy Spirit will alert you to things... and your only obedience is to pray about it. You are to say nothing. You are to take no action. You are to pray.
1. Have you ever been compelled to intentionally pray during a Worship Service? If so, what was your experience?
  2. Have you ever observed someone offering a Pastor unsolicited advice? Do you think that's consistent with the Holy Spirit? As we grow together, how can we avoid that?
  3. What are some of the benefits you can see to having people specifically interceding for a Worship Service or gathering? How is it more effective if that prayer is guided by the Holy Spirit?



# INTERCEDING FOR HEALING

**READ JAMES 5:14-16**

The Scriptures include accounts of Jesus and the Disciples being involved in healing: healing from physical affliction (Mathew 15:30), from inner wounds (Psalm 147:3) and from demonization (Matthew 8:16). The truth is such healing prayer takes place today across the world and even in the United States.

But be cautious of miracles celebrated publically. (Remember the first discernment rule)

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PRAYERS OF HEALING**

1. People do not have the “gift of healing.” God does.
2. In some cases, God allows Holy Spirit empowered individuals to participate in his healing work. This is often done to ensure the recipient has adequate post-care like discipleship or some other need.
3. This should rarely be done in isolation, it is always better with a team. And collectively, the entire team should be utilized.
4. Involve the recipient of prayer. As the intercessors receive potential guidance it is always appropriate to ask the recipient, “Is this on track?”

The point of this devotional is to validate that healing prayer is real and available to us today, not to be ventured into casually but rather with great care and maturity.

Be reminded that Scripture tells us that “God’s ways are above our ways.” It is not always his intention to heal persons in this life, but rather the next.

**REFLECTION QUESTION:**

- What are your thoughts about healing prayer? Do you think there are legitimate examples of it in our context? In the world?
- Do you trust God that he knows best—that there is a purpose behind our experiences?

.....

.....

.....





